Annual Events Report 2025/2026

Building connected, vibrant communities

QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL



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01

Executive Summary

Events are an important part of life in Queenstown Lakes, bringing people together to connect, celebrate and experience the unique character of our communities. This report outlines how Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) enables and supports events throughout the district.

Adopted in June 2025, the QLDC Events Policy provides a framework for Council's role in supporting events. The policy aims to ensure events bring people together in ways that boost community wellbeing, while providing a consistent approach to supporting events that deliver the benefits valued by the Queenstown Lakes community.

As the first report prepared under the policy, it establishes a baseline for future reporting and begins to demonstrate how events contribute to community wellbeing through the social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes they deliver.



Multicultural Festival



Paws in the Park

02

Enabling and Supporting Events

Supporting local events is a collective effort across multiple Council teams. While the Events Office provides coordination and guidance, successful events delivery relies on expertise and approvals from departments across the organisation. Council support is provided through a range of mechanisms.



Summerdaze Shotover

ENABLING EVENT DELIVERY

The Events Office coordinates event permits for larger or more complex events on public land. As the primary point of contact for organisers, it helps navigate Council processes and coordinates requirements across departments, reducing duplication, improving communication, and supporting organisers to meet their obligations.

Smaller community events are supported through reserve bookings, venue hire agreements, and other approval pathways that do not require a formal event permit.

SUPPORTING EVENT DELIVERY ACROSS COUNCIL

Organisers engage with a number of Council teams and services throughout the planning and delivery of events, including:

- Resource consents
- Traffic management approvals
- Special licences
- Venue bookings
- Reserve permits
- Harbour Master services

Together, these functions help support successful events while ensuring public safety, regulatory compliance and effective management of public spaces and resources.

PROVIDING FUNDING AND NON-FUNDING SUPPORT

The Annual Events Fund included a total pool of $287,000 during 2025/26 and provided financial support to 18 large events. Applications were assessed by the Events Committee, comprising selected Councillors, against a range of criteria, with a strong emphasis on sustainability outcomes.

Smaller community events also received support through the Local Community Support budget ($150,000 in 2025/26), which assisted almost 150 events, administered through the Community Partnerships Programme. Support was provided primarily through non-financial contributions such as venue hire, equipment and sustainability assistance. Supported events ranged from ANZAC Day commemorations, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Vaisakhi and Ramadan celebrations, to writers' festivals, orchestral performances, swim meets, ski events, charity fundraisers and neighbourhood community days.

COUNCIL-DELIVERED COMMUNITY EVENTS

Council delivered a range of community events and programmes, including:

- Queenstown New Year's Eve Celebration over three days.
- Wānaka New Year's Eve Celebration over five days.
- Community Christmas show and events.
- Summerdaze events (including the Teddy Bears Picnic) - eight events over two months.

These events provide opportunities for residents and visitors to come together, connect and participate in community life, with many offered free of charge.

HOW COUNCIL SUPPORTS EVENTS

	Small public event held on Council reserve or in venue	Medium/large indoor event in Council venue	Medium/large public event held on Council reserve or land	Large event held on private land
1. Event Permitting			✓	
2. Venues/Reserves bookings	✓	✓	✓	
3. Resource Consents as per requirements of the District Plan - noise, size, etc.			✓	✓
4. Applications for waste reduction and safety support through the Annual Events Fund		✓	✓	✓
5. Local Community Support Fund subsidies venue/reserve hire	✓	✓	✓	
6. Other required approvals	✓	✓	✓	✓
7. QLDC delivered events as required (e.g. special license, TMP, Harbour Master approval, etc.)	Summerdaze	Annual Christmas Show	Wānaka and Queenstown New Year Events	



Wānaka A&P Show

03

QLDC Events Policy

The QLDC Events Policy recognises the important role events play in supporting community wellbeing, economic activity, cultural expression, love of place, and environmental stewardship.

The policy is guided by eight objectives that seek to maximise the benefits of events while minimising potential impacts.



Photo: Ara Jay media Productions

Multicultural Festival

FUNDAMENTAL EXPECTATIONS THAT APPLY TO ALL EVENTS ARE:

- Respect diversity, equity and inclusion
- Ensure the safety of event participants, workers, residents, and audiences
- Minimising adverse impacts, including environmental impacts

OUR FIRST ANNUAL REPORT FOCUSES ON FOUR OBJECTIVES WHERE EXAMPLES AND EVIDENCE CAN CURRENTLY BE PROVIDED:

- Creating opportunities to participate and attend
- Creating a positive sense of community
- Maximising local economic benefit
- Minimising adverse impacts, including environmental impacts

Future reporting will continue to develop measures and reporting frameworks for the remaining policy objectives.



04

Event Activity Snapshot

Our report focuses on a dataset of 60 events that received Council support or assistance through one or more of the following pathways:

- Event Permits
- Annual Events Fund
- Resource Consents (for public facing events)
- Council-delivered events (large community events)

CRITERIA AND SCOPE

There is no single register of all events held across the district. This report focuses primarily on 60 events that had a significant interaction with QLDC through event funding, permitting, venue hire, or resource consent processes.

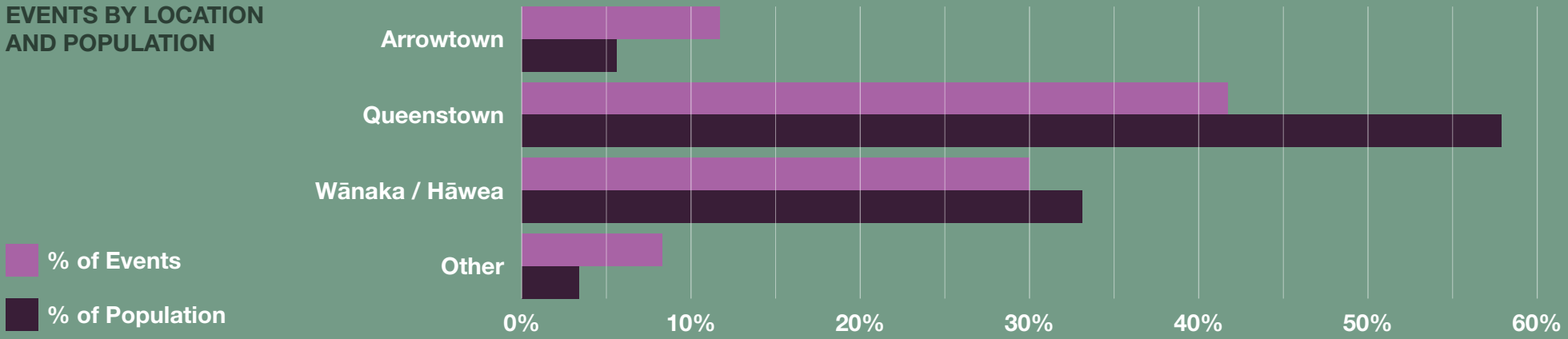
The events highlighted provide a representative cross-section of publicly accessible events held across the district and demonstrate the diversity, scale and community value of the local events sector. The report is not intended to be an exhaustive inventory of all events taking place during the year. While some events engaged with Council through multiple pathways, each event has been counted only once in the dataset.



Queenstown Christmas Show

EVENTS ACTIVITY ACROSS THE DISTRICT

EVENTS BY LOCATION AND POPULATION

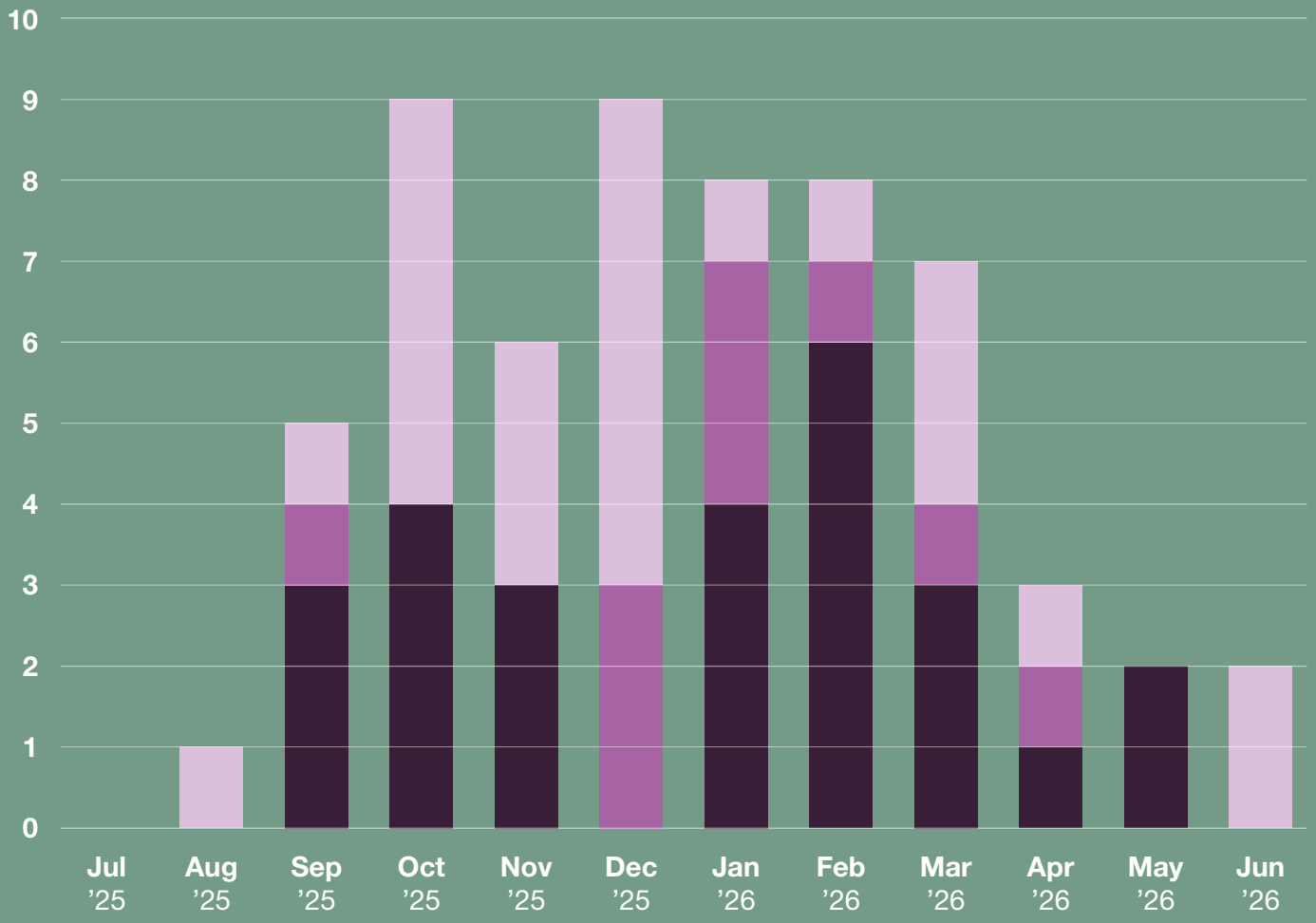


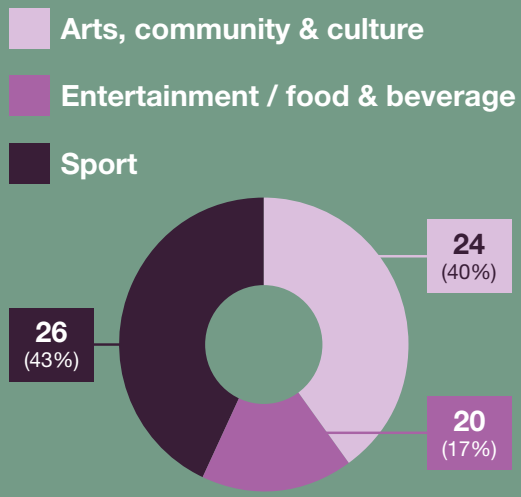
LOCATION BREAKDOWN

Location	Events	% of Events	Population	% of Population
Arrowtown	7	12%	3,028	6%
Queenstown	25	42%	31,167	58%
Wānaka / Hāwea	18	30%	17,797	33%
Other	5	8%	1,810	3%
Events held in more than one location	5	8%	-	-
Total	**60**	**100.0%**	**53,802**	**100.0%**

EVENT ACTIVITY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

NUMBER OF EVENTS





While sporting events account for the largest share of the district’s event programme, community, cultural, arts and entertainment events are equally important in fostering social connection, participation and community wellbeing.

Most events take place during the summer months, taking advantage of favourable weather and the district’s appeal as an outdoor recreation destination. This seasonal pattern highlights opportunities to grow the district’s winter events offering.

Event types were assigned using a primary classification and some events could reasonably fit within more than one category.



Waitangi Day

05

Measuring Outcomes against the Events Policy



Wānaka New Year's Eve Celebrations

OUTCOME 1

MINIMISE ADVERSE IMPACTS

Environmental waste minimisation is a key focus for event planning and Council funding decisions. Council works with organisers to encourage sustainable event practices including waste minimisation and sustainable procurement and environmentally responsible event delivery.



Photo: The Wild and Sustainable Queenstown

HOW ARE WE TRACKING?

Event organisers are increasingly adopting sustainability initiatives that reduce waste, divert materials from landfill and encourage more sustainable behaviours.

- Spanning five days, the **Queenstown and Wānaka New Year's Eve Celebrations** provide free, accessible and alcohol-free events that enable people of all ages to celebrate safely. The programme fosters community connection and wellbeing while supporting a safe and positive festive environment across the district.
- Across three **Global Games** events, organisers achieved an average landfill diversion rate of approximately **93 percent**, supported by waste minimisation initiatives, reusable service ware and pack-in pack-out requirements for vendors.
- **Challenge Wānaka** eliminated approximately **7,750 disposable cups** through the introduction of a no single-use cup system across the course.
- Funding support enabled the **Lake Hayes A&P Show** to introduce reusable serve ware initiatives, preventing an estimated **3,813 single-use items from entering landfill**.
- **The Arrowtown Autumn Festival** expanded waste minimisation initiatives and introduced a successful park-and-ride system to reduce transport-related impacts.
- **Warbirds Over Wānaka** introduced food waste collection for the first time, supporting improved diversion rates and reducing waste sent to landfill.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate the increasing focus on environmental stewardship across our district's events sector.

OUTCOME 2

CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE AND ATTEND

Council-supported events across the district provide opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages and interests to participate in community life. Events held across the district include public celebrations, family-friendly activities, sporting events, cultural programmes and community festivals, helping to create a range of opportunities for people to connect, participate and engage.

The geographic spread and diversity of events featured in this report demonstrate a commitment to ensuring opportunities for participation are accessible to a broad range of people and communities across the district.


Paws in the Park

HOW ARE WE TRACKING?

Events supported opportunities for participation across sport, culture, recreation and the arts.

- The **Christmas programme** included three sold-out performances attended by **2,649 people** and involved more than 100 young performers, crew and support personnel, alongside community Christmas celebrations attended by people of all ages.
- **Challenge Wānaka** engaged approximately **7,800 participants** and attendees, providing opportunities for youth, adaptive athletes and grassroots participants. The event also helped young people experience triathlon and stay involved in sport as they progress through school.
- **Motatapu** attracted **2,688 runners, walkers and mountain bikers**, encouraging participation in outdoor recreation across a broad range of ages and abilities.
- **The New Zealand Mountain Film & Book Festival** provided accessible opportunities through free family programming, school screenings and affordable ticketing.
- **Natural Selection Bike Aotearoa** created participation pathways for local athletes through its Dream Ticket initiative and supported more than **30 attendees with accessibility requirements**.
- The **Michael Hill International Violin Competition** provided affordable access to world-class performing arts experiences for local audiences during the winter shoulder season.

These examples highlight the important role events play in creating accessible opportunities for residents and visitors to participate in community life.

OUTCOME 3

CREATING A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Events help bring people together, strengthen community connections and foster a sense of belonging. Across the district, they create opportunities for residents and visitors to share experiences, celebrate local identity, connect with others and take part in community traditions.

From long-standing community celebrations and sporting competitions to cultural festivals and neighbourhood gatherings, events contribute to community pride, inclusion and social cohesion.


Teddy Bears Picnic

HOW ARE WE TRACKING?

Many events demonstrated strong community participation, volunteer involvement and opportunities for cultural connection and celebration.

- **The Teddy Bears Picnic, Rainbow Runs and Picnic in the Park series** are much-loved family events delivered as part of the Summerdaze programme.
- **Central Lakes Polyfest** brought together more than **6,300 participants and attendees**, creating opportunities for schools, whānau, iwi and community groups to celebrate Māori and Pacific culture and strengthen connections across the region.
- The **Queenstown Multicultural Festival** attracted approximately **3,000 attendees** from diverse backgrounds and provided opportunities for cultural exchange, understanding and inclusion through performance, food and the Cultural Costume Parade.
- The **Global Games Festivals** attracted approximately **8,000 participants** and supporters and highlighted the role sport can play in building connection, belonging and inclusion among young people from diverse communities.
- The **Arrowtown Autumn Festival** continues to demonstrate strong community ownership through the involvement of local schools, clubs, artists, volunteers and community organisations with over **12,000 people** attending.
- The **Wānaka A&P Show** attracted a record **45,000 attendees** and provided opportunities for rural and urban communities to connect through competition, volunteering, exhibitions and community activities.
- The **Lake Hayes A&P Show** attracted approximately **5,000 attendees** and engaged around **85 volunteers**, bringing residents together through agricultural, family and cultural activities.
- **Aspiring Conversations** provided opportunities for residents and visitors to engage with ideas and issues relevant to the Upper Clutha community, fostering discussion, inclusion and connection.

These events help strengthen community wellbeing, celebrate local identity and create opportunities for people to come together in meaningful ways.

OUTCOME 4

MAXIMISING LOCAL ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Events make an important contribution to the local economy by attracting visitors, supporting local businesses and creating demand for accommodation, hospitality, retail and transport services. They also help strengthen Queenstown Lakes' reputation as a destination for recreation, culture and community experiences.

While comprehensive economic impact data is currently available for only a limited number of major events, the available evidence demonstrates the significant value events bring to the district. Future reporting will explore opportunities to capture economic impact data more consistently across major events.


Motatapu

Photo: Motatapu Event

HOW ARE WE TRACKING?

Available evidence demonstrates the substantial economic contribution major events make to the district.

- **The New Zealand Open** generated an estimated **$33.9 million in economic impact** and more than **40,000 visitor bed nights** for the Queenstown Lakes District, while international broadcast coverage reached a global audience of **4.6 million viewers** across more than 100 countries.
- **Warbirds Over Wānaka** reported an estimated regional **economic impact of $57.1 million** for its 2026 event and attracted more than **60,000 attendees**. Also providing extensive national media coverage and visitor spending throughout the region.
- The N**ew Zealand Sotheby's International Realty Queenstown Marathon** generated more than **$25 million in regional economic activity**, with more than **91 percent of participants travelling from outside the district**.
- **Natural Selection Bike Aotearoa** generated **$4.49 million in media value** across broadcast and social media, and over **$1.35 million in direct local spending** while showcasing the district as an international mountain biking destination.
- **Challenge Wānaka** attracted a significant number of participants from outside the district, supporting spending across accommodation, hospitality and tourism businesses.
- The **Michael Hill International Violin Competition** celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2026, attracting visitors, performers, jurors and supporters during the winter shoulder season and delivering economic benefits for local accommodation, hospitality, transport and retail businesses.

These examples demonstrate the important role events play in supporting economic activity, visitor attraction and the district's reputation as a destination for world-class sporting, cultural and community experiences.

Moving Forward: Areas of Focus for 2026/2027

1. Build on environmental waste minimisation and carbon reduction programmes across events.
2. Continue enhancing event delivery through efficient Council processes and strong partnerships, supported by a new online booking system for venues and reserves that will streamline bookings and event permitting for organisers and Council staff.
3. Explore additional ways to maintain crowd safety.

QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

